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EIGHTH MEMOIR OF THE AMERICAN FOLK-LORE  
SOCIETY.

TRADITIONS OF THE SKIDI PAWNEE, BY  
GEORGE A. DORSEY.

ANNOUNCEMENT has already been made of the Eighth Memoir, containing a collection of Pawnee tales, begun under the auspices of the Field Columbian Museum, and continued with the aid of funds provided by the Carnegie Institution. It will now be proper to describe the character of the material presented in this volume, which will probably be ready for delivery to subscribers in October.

It has already been observed that the Skidi make one of the four bands of the Pawnee, having their ancestral home in Central Nebraska, where they supposed man to have been created, and where the remains of their lodges are said to have been visible. The units of their social system were formed by the villages, of which there were nineteen, united by a presumed tie of common descent with hereditary chiefs; every villager being taken for a lineal descendant of the first owner of the sacred "bundle" which had been divinely bestowed on his particular community. To each bundle belonged a myth, giving an account of its origin, and preserved as an hereditary treasure of the keeper of the myth, who imagined the story to be connected with his life, in such manner that parting with the record had a tendency to shorten the term of his earthly days. Though ownership of the bundles is inherited, knowledge of the ritual must be acquired through a long education extended through many years, and involving ascent from grade to grade.

Dr. Dorsey has made a tentative division of the tales into several classes, entitled "Cosmogonic," "Boy Heroes," "Medicine," "Animal Tales," etc. Among these, especial interest attaches to the cosmogony. The religion of the Pawnee has a marked stellar element. It is the stars who are givers of the holy bundles which represent the unity of the several villages, and it is according to the order of the host of heaven that these villages form their encampment when convened for a great ceremony. When the time arrives for the performance of the rite, the priests gather in the lodge proper, and the ritual is sung with appropriate offerings, which consist usually of smoke or food, but in the case of the Evening Star included the sacrifice of a buffalo, and in that of the Morning Star the offering of a human maiden. These rites are supposed to have been given by deities acting as revealers, the highest position being assigned to the Evening and Morning Stars. Above these, as the chief of their pantheon, stands Tirawa, a supreme deity of whom the others are no more

than agents. Next in order of importance comes the Sun, the father of mankind, who furnishes light, the fire for which must daily be renewed in a western Paradise belonging to the Evening Star. The stellar company also possesses its traitor and adversary in the person of a Wolf-Star, who interferes with the plans of the immortals, whom he regards with jealousy.

While the stars appear as chief divinities, yet distinct are animal gods of the earth, in four lodges; these also have their councils, form decisions involving human fortunes, initiate into their mysteries favored individuals, and are peculiarly patrons of the medicine-man and often of the warrior.

These tales do not, as they now stand, form a series with chronological sequence, connected with tribal migrations, and exhibiting a history of the people, such as Dr. Washington Matthews has been able to exhibit in the case of the Navaho; but they present elements which a system-maker could easily convert into such a record. The first narrative, called the "Dispersion of the Gods and the First People," deals with the origin of the world and of mankind. We cite the introduction:—

"In the beginning was Tirawahut, and chief in Tirawahut was Tirawa, the All-Powerful, and his spouse was Atira. Around them sat the gods in council. Then Tirawa told them where they should stand. And at this time the heavens did not touch the earth.

"Tirawa spoke to the gods and said: 'Each of you gods I am to station in the heavens; and each of you shall receive certain powers from me, for I am about to create people who shall be like myself. They shall be under your care. I will give them your land to live upon, and with your assistance they shall be cared for. You (pointing to Sakuru, the Sun) shall stand in the east. You shall give light, and warmth, to all beings and to earth.' Turning to Pah (Moon), Tirawa said: 'You shall stand in the west to give light when darkness comes upon the earth.' — 'Tcuperekata, Bright-Star (Evening-Star), you shall stand in the west. You shall be known as Mother of all things; for through you all beings shall be created.' Turning to Operikata, Great Star (Morning-Star), Tirawa said: 'You shall stand in the east. You shall be a warrior. Each time you drive the people toward the west, see that none lag behind.' — 'You' (pointing to Karariwari, Star-that-does-not-Move, North-Star) 'shall stand in the north. You shall not move; for you shall be the chief of all the gods that shall be placed in the heavens, and you shall watch over them.' — 'You' (pointing to another star) 'shall stand in the south. You shall be seen only once in a while, at a certain time of the year. You shall be known as the Spirit-Star.' — 'You, Black-Star, shall stand in the northeast. You shall be known as the Black-Star; for from you shall come darkness, night.'"

Tirawa gives powers also to other stars, including those of the northeast, northwest, etc., and finally assigns to the Evening-Star functions especially important. "Tirawa then turned to the west and said to Bright-Star: 'I will send to you Clouds, Wind, Lightning, and Thunder. When you have received these gods, place them between you and the Garden. When they stand by the Garden, they shall turn into human beings. They shall have the downy feather in their hair. Each shall wear the buffalo robe for his covering. Each shall have about his waist a lariat of buffalo hair. Each also shall wear moccasins. Each of them shall have the rattle in his right hand. These four gods shall be the ones who will create all things.'

"Now Tirawa sent these gods to the Bright-Star. She placed them between herself and her garden. Tirawa looked, and he was pleased. Now Tirawa told the Bright-Star that he was ready to make the earth; that she should tell the gods to sing, for he was going to drop a little pebble. So these gods began to rattle their gourds and sing. As this was done the Clouds came up. The Winds blew the Clouds. The Lightnings and Thunders entered the Clouds. The Clouds were placed over the space, and as the Clouds were now thick, Tirawa dropped a pebble into them. The pebble was rolled around in the Clouds. When the storm had passed over, there was in the space all water. The four world quarter gods who still sat around Tirawa were now given war-clubs, and were told that as soon as they touched waters they must strike them with their clubs."

The earth, which has grown from this seed, the pebble (believed to be a quartz-crystal, as a bright and suitable origin), is now divided from the waters; by the influence of the divine song the land is clothed with plants, and these are animated by the Winds, Rains, Lightnings, and Thunders in the same way as the streams of water are made sweet, and the seeds to sprout. The Evening and Morning Stars come together and have a girl, the Sun and Moon a boy.

"Now the time had come for the female child to be put upon the earth. So Tirawa spoke to Bright-Star and said: 'You must now place the girl upon the clouds, in order that she may be taken and placed upon the earth.' So Bright-Star spoke to the gods, telling them to sing about making the storm. As the Clouds arose, she took her little girl, and placed her upon the Clouds. As the old men rattled their gourds and sang about the storm travelling downwards to the earth, the Clouds moved toward the earth. The storm passed over the earth, and all at once a funnel-shaped Cloud touched the earth. Hence the Pawnee got the name 'Tcuraki,' or Rain-Standing, the name for the girl."

The Moon, similarly, is bidden to place her boy on the earth, and as a male, he receives the name of "Closed-Child." The couple

meet, but do not understand. "Tirawa spoke to Bright-Star, and said: 'Tell the four gods to sing about putting life into the children.' So the Evening-Star commanded the four gods to sing, and send the Winds, Clouds, Lightnings, and Thunders, to put life into these children, and to give them understanding. As the four gods rattled their gourds, the Winds arose, the Clouds came up, the Lightnings entered the Clouds. The Thunders also entered the Clouds. The Clouds moved down upon the earth, and it rained upon the two children. The Lightnings struck about them. The Thunders roared. It seemed to awaken them. They understood.

"After this, they lay together. After many months a child was born to them. When the child was born they seemed to understand all; that they must labor to feed the child and to clothe him. Before this time they had not cared anything about clothing or food, nor for shelter."

Again the spirits of the storm whirl about the lodge, and instruct the woman in the making of the fireplace, and the use of fire-sticks, taught by Lightning. Clothing is given to the man, and he is taught how to name the animals. During his heavenly career, his grandfather, the Sun, holds up before the youth the divine bow, and the youth makes in imitation his own weapons. The buffalo are brought, and among them is found a female yellow calf, which is holy to Tirawa; the heart and tongue are offered, the skin removed, and made to contain the sacred objects of the bundle, including an ear of corn, skins of owls, sweet grass, flint-stones, and paints; in vision the Evening-Star communicates the proper ritual.

The people prosper and multiply, but find that they are not alone on the earth, seeing that other stars, at the bidding of Tirawa, have made separate creations. These peoples have bundles, but do not know their use; it is resolved, therefore, to convene a great gathering, and perform a ceremony in imitation of Tirawa, when he made earth and its inhabitants. The various bands come together, and encamp after the celestial order of the stars, their respective creators and patrons. Under the direction of Closed-Man, the first priest, inspired by the Evening-Star, rites are held. When the priest dies, his skull is placed on the sacred bundle, so that his spirit may forever be present with the Skidi. In course of time this skull is accidentally broken, and by divine revelation superseded by that of a successor.

This origin myth is accompanied by a number of other narratives, which supply further information in regard to primeval history. The second story, "Lightning visits the Earth," belongs to a period subsequent to the separation of heaven and earth, but antedating the introduction of mankind. We learn that it was at first designed

that the terrestrial race should be immortal. The first dwellers of the land were no other than the divine stars themselves, whom Lightning brought in his tornado-sack. They liked the scene so well that they were disposed to remain, and earth would have a celestial people, had it not been for the jealousy of one particular star, the befooling wolf, who undertook to steal the sack, and was killed ; so death entered the world. Lightning, to obviate the doom, is disposed to make a sacrifice (as it seems, an expiatory offering) of a wolf, but the attempt fails, and a land of the dead exists in the south, whither the wolf has fled. In the ritual this relation is indicated, and the bundles are turned toward the south.

Again, another scene of the fragmentary record describes a struggle between the animal gods of earth and the stellar deities, in which the former play the part of adversaries, sending a dangerous girl, who, however, is rendered innocuous.

The stories, as will be seen, form a number of prose epics, not as yet brought into a continuous series. Numerous questions occur. It seems evident that Christian ideas have entered into the mythology, been mingled with a more ancient stratum of thought, and elaborated into highly poetic creations. The material not having been reduced to a canon, each reciter would have his own views respecting sequence and detail. When the myths of the remaining Pawnee bands are made public, light will doubtless be thrown on many points still enigmatical.

The next class of tales Dr. Dorsey has grouped under the title of "Boy-Heroes." The theme is, that a poor orphan, neglected, and, therefore often ugly and apparently witless, is pitied by divine beings, and visited in trance or taken to their lodge ; he receives magic power, by means of which he is enabled to distinguish himself in war and the hunt ; he marries a chief's daughter, and in the end becomes himself a chief and leader of the people. As an example, we may cite one of the shorter histories, in which Lightning (who has already appeared as a mediator between men and deities) is the beneficent and inspiring power.

"A long time ago there was a family which prospered and had many children. All at once these people seemed to have evil fortune, for the father and mother died, and the boy had only one sister left.

"The boy was poor. He left his sister with one of his aunts and wandered over the country. He made up his mind that if there was any power to be obtained from animals, he would try to get it from them by making himself poor in heart. He climbed high hills, and cried until he was very weak. He gave up, then tried along rivers and ponds, but there were no signs of any animals. He went to places where he understood that mysterious human beings dwelt, — such as

scalped-men and wonderful dwarfs. These mysterious and wonderful beings did not seem to care for him. He was angry; he called the gods names; the animals he called hard names.

"One day he climbed a high hill and stayed upon the top for many days. As the boy was lying down he heard the storm coming up. He stood up, then he saw dark clouds coming over him, and he gave bad names to the storm, rain, lightning, and wind; for he had been wandering over the land, and the gods in the heavens had refused to listen to his cry. The animal gods had also refused to hear his crying, so he was angry. The storm passed over him; although it thundered over his head, the lightning striking around him, still he stood there, pleading with the gods in the clouds to kill him.

"A few days afterwards another storm came up, and by this time the boy's heart was softened, and he cried hard. He spoke and said: 'Whatever you are, Lightning, take pity upon me. I am poor.' All at once the boy was struck by Lightning. The people in the bottom had been watching the boy. After the storm the people went up the hill to see the boy; but when they arrived there was no boy. They sought and sought for his body, and at last they found it."

They find that the boy still lives, but has on his face streaks of many colors, like those of lightning; accordingly they leave him. The boy comes to himself, and is visited by Lightning. "Well, you now see me; I am that being who makes lightning in the clouds. I am that being whom you wish to see. My face is all lightning, as also are my hands. I touched you with my lightning, and I put marks upon your face and hands, as on mine. You can now travel with me in the clouds. When it thunders you must listen, for it is my voice; you can hear me speak."

The boy becomes a famous priest and medicine-man, hears the directions given in the thunderstorm, and communicates them to the people.

"Of this old Thunder-Man it is related that he used to climb up on the earth lodge, and sit on top, his robe turned with the hair side out. When it thundered he would speak loud, and tell the people what the Thunder said. They used to listen, for there were times when this old man told them that the god wanted the people to sweep out their lodges and clean the grounds outside; that disease was certainly coming. The people always did what the old man said. At other times, in spring or summer, the old man used to tell all the people to take their children to the creek and bathe them, for the gods were to visit them in the clouds."

While in this particular history the divine friend is a celestial being, it is more common to find the savior among animals or plants, who endow him each with their supernatural ability; the bear, buf-

falo, elk, owl, and snowbird figure among benefactors, and also the thistle, or Mother-Earth herself, who animates the pony of mud which the youth makes. Generally the motive is merely the pity which these beings feel for the unprotected; in one case gratitude plays a part, as the mother-mouse is thankful for the deliverance of her young. Frequently the representation of friendship has a part in the drama; the hero selects a companion, whom he chooses not from the superior class, but from the poor lads of the village; to this comrade the chief actor leaves his accoutrements and his bride, himself vanishing, and going to live among the divine personages by whom he has been adopted.

In these narratives the reader is continually struck by interesting parallels or contrasts. In the first place it is noteworthy that in spite of the simplicity of life and what we should consider the absence of accumulated wealth, distinctions of riches and poverty were quite as marked in an Indian village as they have ever been in civilized society. Just as in antiquity or mediæval time, it is the orphan who needs a protector, and whose succor is a chivalric obligation, recommended by the example of gods themselves. The power and frequent tyranny of the chief of the village, also the manner in which his whim can override individual rights, is forcibly presented in the tales. Humane sentiments are as strongly recommended as religious emotion; the strength of family affection, the sacredness of the tie between brother and sister, receive frequent exhibition.

The last of the ninety tales is a love story, which abounds in intimate details of Pawnee life. A chief and his "brave" have each a boy, another chief and his brave each a girl; these become acquainted, and the children of the chiefs form a mutual attachment, as also does the other pair. Arrived at maturity, the youths decide to join a war-party, and the girls make secret preparations to accompany the expedition, in order that they may test with their own eyes the prowess of the young warriors. Without the consent of the leaders, both the youths and maidens succeed in joining the party. The enemy unexpectedly attack, and Black, son of the brave, is terrified and flies, while White behaves bravely; but when abandoned, Black comes to himself, does desperate deeds, and kills many of the foe, but is overpowered and made prisoner. Little-Eyes, the friend of the youth, refuses to abandon him; she follows the trail, crying to Tirawa and the stars to aid her; she traces the warriors to their village, where she finds a woman of her own race who, when a girl, had been captured, and had given birth to many male children; these take pity on Little-Eyes, and promise to help her effect the escape of her lover. This rescue is accomplished, while it is sup-



posed that mischievous young men have amused themselves with the captive, who was to have been publicly burned. Black returns, carrying scalps and covered with glory, to find that his comrade in arms (so to speak) had died of shame and grief consequent on the loss of his companion. Black has further opportunity of distinguishing himself, and at last ventures to address Little-Eyes, whom he has hitherto avoided. "The young man saw her, and, for the first time since they had returned, thought how brave she was to follow the enemy for his sake, and how she had lifted up her hands to the meteors in the heavens. The youth could not bear it. He walked to the dancers and touched the girl. She looked around and saw that it was Black. She went to him. As she approached he opened his arms and embraced her, and put his robe over her. They stood together a long time, neither speaking, when the girl said: 'At last you have touched me, and I came to you. Tell me, what is it? Since we came back, you seem to have forgotten me. You never go anywhere. You seem not to care for me any more. So I dressed and danced, thinking that I might have an opportunity to see you. Now you have come.' The youth said: 'What you say is true. But I thought, with shame, of my friend who died. Now I have added to my killing another notch. To-night I cease to think of my friend. You shall take his place, and to-morrow, when the Sun rises in the east, I shall be at your lodge to ask your father for you. I am going home, and I shall tell my father, so that he can call my uncles, and they will help about the present that must be sent to your relatives, if these are willing to have me for their son-in-law. This is the only way in which I will marry you.' The girl wished to go with him, but he would not let her. The young man said: 'I shall not take you home, for I do not wish you to dance any more. I will think of you until the dawn appears in the east, then I shall enter your lodge.' By this time they were near the entrance of her lodge, and the young man embraced her and sent her in."

It need only be added that this series of tales, like every collection of the sort, supplies abundant parallels to themes of European folk-lore, which are generally represented in a more primitive stage, where their original significance can be better apprehended.